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W. H. Burr

Bacon and Shakspeare

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Bacon and Shakspeare.

PROOF

THAT

WILLIAM SHAKSPERE

William Shakspeare

COULD NOT WRITE.

BY

WM. HENRY BURR,

WASHINGTON, D. C.

JANUARY 22, 1886.

PREFACE.

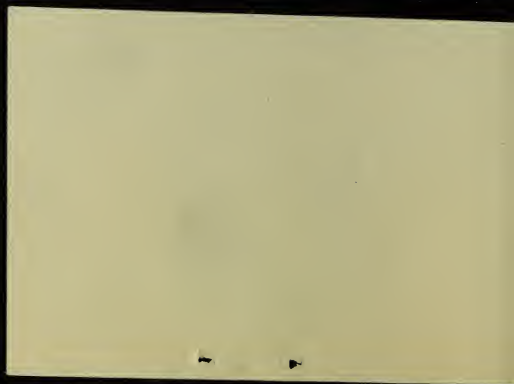


QUEEN ELIZABETH'S "YOUNG LORD KEEPER."

FROM A BUST.

J. Balcan

Viscount St. Albans.



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PROOF

THAT

SHAKSPERE COULD NOT WRITE.

No handwriting of Shakspeare has ever been discovered except five autographs. In March 1613, when he was nearly 49 years old, he signed his name to a mortgage, and again to a deed relative to the same transaction. Three years later he subscribed his name to three briefs or sheets of his will. The five facsimiles are here reproduced :

W^m ShakspeWilliam
ShakspeareWilliam
Shakspeare

William Shakspeare

William Shakspeare

They are all such signatures as an illiterate person, unaccustomed to write, would be likely to scrawl ; and

PROOF THAT SHAKSPERE

they are so different that an acquaintance with one is little help to the recognition of another.

In the first signature he writes Wm. for William.

The second and third autographs have William written above Shakspere. Who but an illiterate person would sign his name thus?

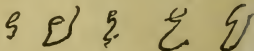
In the last two signatures (being told perhaps that his name ought to be written on one line) he puts William before Shakspere; but the fourth William reads Willin.

See now how differently each letter is formed in the name Shakspere, beginning with the initial:

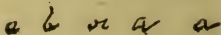


Did anybody ever write the first letter of his name so differently? After four attempts to form a capital S he succeeds tolerably well the fifth time. The second S, though of singular shape, appears to have been a customary one as early as 1598. (See examples of that year below.) Shakspere's first attempt to form the crooked letter is a failure, but the second passably good. So again in 1616, when he has a different form to copy, his first attempt is futile, the second is passable, and the third quite successful.

But in attempting the next letter he makes it worse every time:



With the letter *a* he is more successful, making it legible three times out of five:



COULD NOT WRITE.

But the attempt to form a *k* is a signal failure:

k k k k k

With the long *s* he succeeds best the first time, and worst the second and third:

s s s s s

The letter *p* is legible the first time, but grows worse and worse to the last:

p p p p p

It seems as if in the first attempt to sign his name in 1613 he thought it was complete when he made it end with *s p e*; but being reminded that it lacked a letter or two he undertook to add one by putting an *a* over the *e* thus:

ae

The next time, which was probably the same day, he seems to have written his name Shaksper, though the terminal letters are uncertain:

Shaksper

The third time he gets it more like Shakspoze:

Shakspoze

* The deed to Shakspere and two other trustees is dated March 10 and signed Henry Walker. The mortgage from Shakspere and the other trustees is dated March 11. But for some unaccountable reason a duplicate verbatim copy of the deed from Henry Walker is signed by William Shakspere. This duplicate is in the Library of the city of London; the mortgage is in the British Museum. The duplicate deed we suspect was signed after the mortgage. Hence the improvement in the autograph; it was probably Shakspere's second attempt to write. Compare it with the third.

PROOF THAT SHAKSPEARE

The fourth time he seems to have tried to disguise the termination with awkward flourishes, making the letters totally illegible:

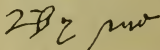


Finally, he omits the flourishes and comes nearer legibility, but still it is impossible to tell whether he meant to write *ear*, *ere*, or *eare*:



And now let the reader mark, that notwithstanding the orthodox spelling of the name from 1593 to 1616, and indeed up to the present time, was and is *Shakespeare*, there is no *e* in the first syllable and no *a* in the last, although some have imagined the letter *a* to exist in the last part of the final autograph.

We have said that these signatures are all that Shakspeare is known to have written; we ought to add that he prefixed to the last one the following scrawl:



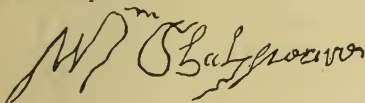
For a long time we puzzled over this. Could it be an attempt to write "25th of March," the day of the execution of the will? At last we read the following in Hallowell-Phillipps's *Shakspeare*:

"It may be observed that the words *By me*, which, the autograph excepted, are the only ones in the poet's handwriting known to exist, appear to have been penned with ordinary firmness."

Presuming that the signatures were made in a sick bed, the author concedes that the words "*By me*" were penned with ordinary firmness. Very good; but could not almost any five-year-old boy do as well the first time?

COULD NOT WRITE.

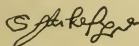
In 1775 certain papers and legal instruments were published, attributed to Shakspeare, Queen Elizabeth, and Southampton. In 1796 Edmund Malone proved them to be forgeries. Here is one of the forged autographs of Shakspeare:



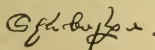
This is superior to any of the genuine ones, which in some degree it resembles. The letter *a* is pretty clearly written in the last syllable, as if the forger meant to establish the proper spelling of that part of the name. Malone, who at first pronounced the genuine orthography to be Shakspeare, subsequently declared Shakspeare to be the poet's own mode of spelling his name beyond all doubt. But others do not accede to this decision, because they think there is an *a* in the last of the five genuine signatures.

The solution of the whole mystery is in the fact that Shakspeare was unable to write or even to spell his own name.

In 1598 Richard Quiney addressed a letter to him asking for a loan of £30, and the name was written Shackesper:



In the same year among thirteen names of holders of corn in Stratford the last but one is Shakesper:



NOTE.

The foregoing pages are copied by permission from a very interesting pamphlet published by W. H. Burr, of Washington, D. C., under the title "Shakespeare Could Not Write." The book contains a further discussion of Shakespeare's signatures, proving conclusively the statement made in the title. It also contains the

"SONNETS WRITTEN BY BACON TO ESSEX," AND

"BACON IDENTIFIED AS THE CONCEALED POET IGNOTO,"

as well as other interesting matter. Bound in paper covers—price 25 cents, mailed on receipt of price.

SIR FRANCIS BACON'S CIPHER STORY

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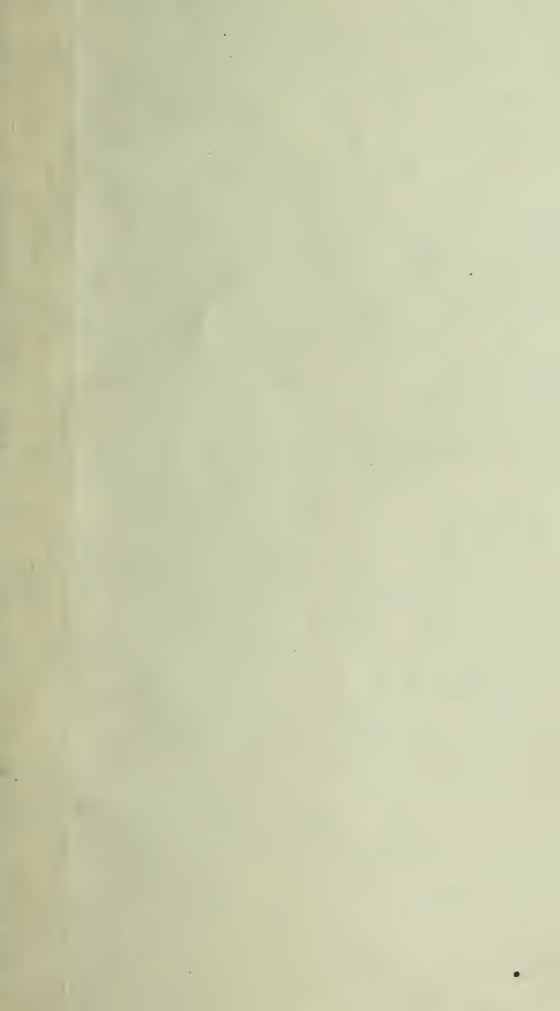
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